



Questions & Answers on the States of Oregon, Idaho, & Washington Request to Lethally Remove California Sea Lions in the Columbia River

(Jan. 30, 2007)

Q. What decision did the agency announce today?

A. In December 2006, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) [received an application](#) co-signed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, to lethally remove problem California sea lions they believe are having a significant negative impact on the recovery of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River basin listed under the Endangered Species Act. NOAA Fisheries Service today announced its determination that the states' application contains sufficient information to warrant convening a Pinniped-Fishery Interaction Task Force as detailed in Section 120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The agency is making the application available for public comment.

Q. Can the states immediately begin killing sea lions that eat too many salmon and steelhead?

A. No. The MMPA requires a number of procedural steps and evaluations in considering whether the states' application should be approved or denied. NOAA Fisheries Service must also comply with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), which requires agencies to consider the environmental effects of their actions. If the agency approves the application, it issues the states a letter of authorization. The entire process could take two to four years.

Q. In the meantime, what is being done to reduce the impact of sea lions on at-risk salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River?

A. During the spring salmon return in 2005 and 2006, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), NOAA, Oregon and Washington tried to deter California sea lions from foraging on salmon and steelhead in Bonneville dam's fish passage facilities and tailrace area. Although the Corps stopped sea lions from entering the dam's fish passage system, the agencies' collective non-lethal deterrence efforts have done little to reduce predation of salmon and steelhead in the tailrace area. In 2007, the Corps and states plan to step up their non-lethal deterrence efforts (by increasing the number of days of deterrence operations from four to seven per week), as resources allow.

Q. Can the public and interested agencies and organizations participate in the NOAA Fisheries Service evaluation of the state's application?

A. Yes. NOAA Fisheries Service is soliciting public comments on the states' application and any additional information that should be considered by the task force in making its recommendation, or by NOAA in making its determination whether to approve or deny the application. The comment period is open until Apr. 2, 2007. [You may provide comments and information several ways.](#) Other public comment opportunities may be provided as part of the NEPA process.